
Report outlines Calif.'s 'green-chemistry' ideas

By Roger Renstrom

SACRAMENTO, CALIF. (June 10, 5:15 p.m. EDT) -- California is reviewing 38 recommended approaches and requirements for reducing toxic compounds in the state.

The findings may help provide a broad-based model for implementation in California and other locales.

In April 2007, the state Environmental Protection Agency launched the Green Chemistry Initiative, primarily through its Department of Toxic Substances Control. A nationally dispersed panel of 21 science advisers was formed in the fall.

The members are "leading thinkers and innovators of green chemistry," DTSC director Maureen Gorsen said in a news release. "Their willingness to wrestle with our state policy issues demonstrates their belief in the potential of California to create a new, robust green-materials economy."

Panel Chairman John Warner is president and chief technology officer of Warner Babcock Institute for Green Chemistry LLC, a research and development firm in Woburn, Mass. Most members are academics, researchers or environmental advocates. Corporate representatives include Neil Hawkins, vice president of sustainability with Dow Chemical Co. in Midland, Mich., and William Carroll Jr., vice president of Occidental Chemical Corp.

On June 2, after numerous meetings and seven public workshops, the panel issued a 70-page report with appendices covering another 111 pages. A compendium from the University of Massachusetts' Lowell Center for Sustainable Production references comparable state, federal and foreign programs.

In order to create green-chemistry supply and demand, the state needs a diverse set of options, the report said. Those options should bridge gaps that hinder current efforts.

"The central concept ... is that the advancement of green chemistry in California is an effective vehicle to promote innovation in ways that also protect human health and the environment and provide economic opportunities," the report said.

Governmental agencies, industrial concerns, universities and not-for-profit organizations are targeted as possible "agents of change" in bringing viable options to fruition.

The scientific advisory panel's proposals may be included in the multiagency initiative's final report, due in a few months to state EPA secretary Linda Adams. The state may seek more feedback on the report's conceptual framework.

No costs were disclosed, but the state is funding the initiative within its existing budget, DTSC said.

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